

This week President Obama addressed the nation from West Point Military Academy regarding the way forward in Afghanistan. I'm encouraged by the President's decision to follow the recommendations of his top general in Afghanistan and will increase troop levels as part of a counter-insurgency strategy. This mission is of the utmost importance to the United States and our national security. A stable Afghanistan that partners with us against al Qaeda and like-minded extremists will significantly bolster our security, while the potential return of the Taliban to power—the same group that harbored Bin Laden and allowed al Qaeda to plot 9/11 from Afghan soil—would invite these terrorists back into the country and represent a serious setback to our security. Further, U.S. troops are playing a vital role in gradually stabilizing the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, helping to strengthen the Pakistan government and ward off utter chaos in a country that has nuclear weapons and a large number of al Qaeda terrorists who wouldn't hesitate to use them if they had access to such devastating weapons. Our troops serving there now have done heroes work and I am confident that those deployed in the coming months will serve just as honorably. I firmly believe that we must support our brave men and women in uniform with the resources they need to successfully complete this mission.

It is my hope that President Obama will remain steadfast in his commitment to winning the war in Afghanistan and that he will urge his fellow Democrats in Congress to ensure that our troops are fully funded and supplied. I am concerned about the message that the President is sending the world and our troops by pursuing an arbitrary timeline for an 'exit strategy.' I believe that victory should be our timeline. Accepting an eighteen month deadline is a clear indication to the Taliban and al Qaeda that they can simply wait us out, that we don't have the stomach for this fight. I am looking forward to hearing the in-depth strategy from the President and I am pleased that Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, General McChrystal, and our leading diplomats will testify before Congress in the coming days and weeks. Although the circumstances are somewhat different, I am upbeat that a fully-resourced counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan can have similar results as it did in Iraq, and I will continue to support our troops as they implement it.